

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 25, 2002

The Honorable J. Dennis Hastert
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Speaker:

We were heartened to hear Republican National Committee Chairman Marc Racicot join our call for a full debate on President Bush's Social Security privatization proposals. We have long held that the American people deserve such a debate before the November elections. Privatization will lead to benefit cuts across the board, and will drain trillions from the Social Security trust fund. It is imperative that the American people hear the details of these plans this year. This issue is too important to put off or sweep under the rug. The time for debate is now.

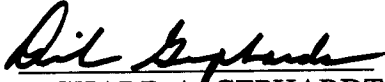
As you know, Social Security is one of the most important and successful programs in American history. It has kept millions of citizens – both young and old – out of poverty for more than 65 years. As I am sure you are aware, President Bush's handpicked commission unveiled three separate plans last December, each of which would privatize Social Security. Although we have heard Republican leaders in the House voice their support for the President's plans as well as other Republican privatization proposals, they refuse to mark up any legislation in Committee, hold a debate, and bring it to a vote on the floor of the House. Instead of honest discussion, we have seen cynical attempts to provide political cover, such as a proposal to force the Social Security Administration to spend \$80 million in much-needed resources on worthless "Guarantee Certificates" that carry no legal weight. Even more troubling are reports that Republicans are intentionally planning to scuttle their privatization plans until after the November elections, and then move forward with them in 2003.

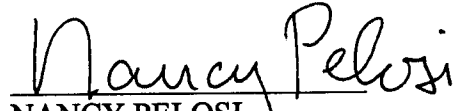
Democrats believe that the American people deserve to hear the details of these proposals before the elections. Since the President and Congressional Republicans have been unwilling to submit their plans to the rigors of the legislative process, Democrats have taken the unusual step of introducing the President's three plans as legislation. These bills have been referred to the House Ways and Means Committee and await further action.


It is our sincere hope that you will bring these bills to the floor for a vote as soon as possible, so that the American people will have a chance to join the discussion on Social Security privatization. As I am sure you would agree, Social Security affects the lives of millions of Americans, and the public deserves a seat at the table.


We look forward to an open and honest debate and vote on this issue.

Sincerely,

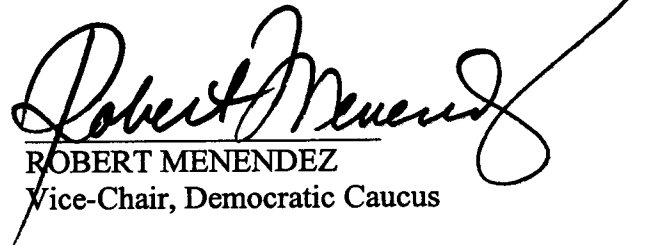

RICHARD A. GEPHARDT
Minority Leader

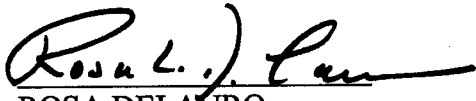

NANCY PELOSI
Minority Whip


CHARLES B. RANGEL
Ranking Member,
Ways and Means Committee


ROBERT T. MATSUI
Ranking Member,
Social Security Subcommittee


MARTIN FROST
Chair, Democratic Caucus


ROBERT MENENDEZ
Vice-Chair, Democratic Caucus


ROSA DELAURO
Assistant to the Democratic Leader

Similar letter sent to:
Hon. Bill Thomas
Hon. E. Clay Shaw, Jr.